

The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle

by Heaven Sent Tenshi

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Summary: RedVSBlue fanfic. Takes place before the arrival of Caboose, Donut, and Sheila or the building of Lopez. This is the real reason Tucker doesn't use the sniper rifle. FINISHED!

1. The Observer, EDIT

A/N: This is the edited version. For those of you who read the original version, this won't seem much different, until you get to the old Grif-goof. He's a bit more in-character now.

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The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle

> Chapter 1: The Observer
 Heaven Sent Tenshi

"Remind me why we're out hereâ€|" Grif groaned, kicking at a nearby rock. He turned to Simmons as he sighed.

"Sarge asked us to come over here to the caves to establish another base camp to extend our perimeters," the soldier in maroon replied in exasperation.

"Yeah, but why are we doing it? For all we know, the Blues could be waitin' in here, ready to ambush us!"

"We saw all three of the Blues milling around their base; they aren't gonna attack us in hereâ€|" Grif scoffed, poking at another rock with his assault rifle as he muttered a few curses beneath his breath.

"And I doubt those rocks plan on attacking us eitherâ€|"

Grif scoffed again, advancing into the cave. "Shove it, Simmonsâ€|" The other replied in imitation, following the orange soldier. As they turned a corner, Simmons was surprised to run into his back.

"Owâ€| Grif, what're you-?" Simmons paused as he peered round his comrade. "Is thatâ€|?" Grif nodded, stepping forward, rifle at the

ready.

Before the pair was what looked like a lump of flesh and clothing. Blood pooled around the figure as it lay, hunched and unmoving, in something of a crater; the earth looked to have been forced up from its resting place by some unknown force. Grif slowly came upon the figure, rifle outstretched to roll it over. As he approached it, though, a shield sprang to life, crackling and sputtering before phasing out completely. Simmons walked around the crater, crouching down by the lip.

"Odd," he muttered as Grif slid down the three feet to the figure. Slowly, he reached out, rolling the figure onto its back.

"Itâ€¦ it's humanâ€¦ and a _woman_â€¦" It was impossible to see, but the way he stated this made it known that he was smirking.

"I think she's hurtâ€¦ bad, tooâ€¦"

"Yeah, by the looks of itâ€¦ she might even beâ€¦ deadâ€¦"

"Ya think?"

"I dunnoâ€¦."

"Well, check her pulse then."

"Yeah, yeah, I was gettin' to thatâ€¦ Jackassâ€¦"

"What was that?"

"â€¦ I think I feel a pulse."

"That was _not_ what you said."

"Shut up and get down here; help me get her outta this hole."

"Wouldn't it be better if I stayed up here while you hand her up to meâ€¦? 'Cuz, y'know, three feet _is_ pretty high."

Grif growled in response, slowly gathering the girl up in his arms and lifting her out of the hole. Carefully, he lay her down upon the ground. Her head turned to face the pair. Her black hair lay matted and splattered with a bit of blood. Her eyes were shut tight and there were many lacerations on her skin including a large wound on her left shoulder. She wore a tan button-front shirt with four pockets on the front, two on her chest and two down by her waist. She also adorned a forest green, pleated skirt, a dark brown belt and a pair of tall, brown boots.

"Uhâ€¦ what d'ya think we should do with her?" Grif asked, staring at the girl.

"Well, she's breathingâ€¦ so, we should probably take her back to Red Base."

"Yeahâ€¦" Grif watched her a moment before turning to Simmons. "Go ahead."

"Go ahead? Hang on; I didn't say _I_ was gonna carry her back."

"So?"

"_You_ carry her."

"I picked her up to start with."

"So?" Simmons smirked having echoed Grif's own answer back at him.

"So, that means it's _your_ turn."

"Who said we were taking turns?"

"Me. Just pick her up, she isn't _that_ heavy."

"Then _you_ carry her."

"If _I_ carry her, then there'll be no one to protect us if the Blues decide to attack us."

"The Blues aren't going to attack!" Simmons turned to look at the girl as she lay, bleeding on the ground. He sighed before crouching down to lift her into his arms. Rising to his feet again, he was about to tell Grif off when he noticed that the orange soldier was missing. "Oh, he's gonna get it when we get back to Baseâ€¦" With that note firmly implanted into his mind, Simmons jogged back to Red Base, amusement no where to be found in his presence.

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"She was justâ€¦ _layin'_ there?" Sarge inquired, studying the girl who had yet to move. She was lying on a steel table inside the red base. Her wounds were covered by cloth bandages and the Reds could do nothing but wait until she awoke.

"Yes, Sir," Simmons replied. "We aren't sure where the crater came from or why we didn't hear or see her arrival."

"I seeâ€¦ Do y'know anything about her?"

"Only that she isn't a soldier. We have yet to find an ID of any kind."

"Hmmâ€¦. Ok, good work, Simmons."

"Thank you, Sir."

Grif coughed into his hand, the words "Kiss-ass" barely being filtered out.

"Grif!" Sarge called, causing said soldier to look up. "I'm putting you in charge of watching her. Simmons, I want you to go back out and check on those caves. See if you can figure out where she came from and when she got here."

"Yes, Sir!" Simmons then promptly headed out the door of the base. As Sarge went off to check on the Blues, Grif circled the

table.

"Hmâ€|" He turned toward the wall then began to turn circles in his boredom. A moment later, a moan caused him to freeze. Turning about, he noticed that the girl had rolled her head. Her dark green eyes were open as she surveyed the orange man before her.

"Whereâ€|?"

"You're awake?" Grif asked, approaching the table. The girl murmured something to the affirmative. "Good. You got a name?"

"Torinâ€| Michelle Torinâ€|"

"Got a rank?"

"A rankâ€|?"

"Military rank."

"â€| No, I'mâ€| I'm not part of the militaryâ€|. Iâ€| wait, where am I?"

"You're in Blood Gulch Outpost Number 1. It's a military base in The Middle of Nowhere. We found you in the caves near here. Do ya remember how ya got here? And why there's a big crater where ya wereâ€|?"

"Huh? Iâ€|" Torin paused, slowly sitting up and holding her head. "Perhaps I should start at the beginning; maybe I won't confuse youâ€|. I'm part of a team of Observers. Basically, we watch Halo to be sure the Covenant isn't planning anythingâ€| if there are any Covenant members left that isâ€| Personally, I think Command is crazyâ€|"

"I know the feelingâ€|"

Torin smiled before continuing. "My ship had gone in for a closer lookâ€| before we were shot downâ€| We were told not to survey this canyon, as it could be dangerousâ€| I suppose your friends on the other side were the reasoning behind thatâ€|"

"Ya mean you were on that ship the Blues shot down? That was a week ago!"

"Has it been that longâ€|? Iâ€| don't remember too muchâ€| but the pilots were shot and killedâ€| I was the only one able to activate a shieldâ€| Iâ€| I don't think anyone else survivedâ€| I leapt from the ship as it neared the ground; I think my shield caused me to bounce because I landed down hereâ€| "

"Y'know, there is a hole in the roof of that caveâ€| I saw it when we went inâ€|" Grif crossed his arms as the other looked around her. The room was mostly empty, save for a few strange red marks on the floor and walls.

"Why was I brought here?"

"Huh?" Grif looked over at her. "You were hurt; we brought ya over

here to help ya."

"Yesâ€¦ but _why_?"

"Uhâ€¦ you needed help?"

Torin sighed, reaching behind her. She pulled a small black box off of her belt and brought it around front. It was cracked and it sparked as she pressed on of the three buttons on its face.

"What's that?" Grif asked, inspecting the device. Torin looked up.

"It's my shield."

"â€¦ Nifty."

"Yeah, I knowâ€¦ it's compact, light-weight, and easy to turn onâ€¦" She pressed another button. The resulting shock caused her to shriek and toss the device away. She cradled her hand. "â€¦ and now it's broken."

"I could've told ya thatâ€¦" Grif bent down, picking up the box. "Aw, it can't be that badâ€¦ Which one did'ya push?"

"The green one. It's _supposed_ to turn it onâ€¦ butâ€¦"

Grif lifted a finger, pushing the button. "OW!" He tossed it away as well as Torin smirked. "Damnit! That fuckin' hurt!"

"And I could've told _you_ _that_."

"It doesn't normally do that, does it?"

"Yeah, it's not really my shield; it's actually a taser with which to torture puny minded creatures."

Grif stared at her blankly for a moment. "Really? 'Cuz that'd be kinda cool."

"No, you idiot; it's broken, didn't you see the crack and the sparks?"

"Well, yeahâ€¦ I justâ€¦ never mind."

"I'm hoping that that shock just got to you."

"Yeahâ€¦ that's itâ€¦ I'm just disoriented from the shock that little piece of shit just gave me."

"Nah, he's always like that," Sarge murmured, re-entering the room. Grif threw him a dirty glare.

"No I'm not!"

"Yeah ya are, ya pansy."

"Shove it."

"Grifâ€¦"

"Shove it, _Sir_."

"Better."

Torin stared at the two for a moment before retrieving her sparking device from the floor. "And, who might you two be, anyway? I gave you my name, but you," she pointed to Grif, "never gave me yours."

"Oh, yeahâ€¦ The name's Grif. That's Sarge. He's our Sergeant, more or lessâ€¦"

"More or less?" Sarge exclaimed, "I'll have you know I've been with this base since the beginning!"

"Iâ€¦ seeâ€¦" Torin murmured, a blank look on her face.

"Soâ€¦" Sarge paused, looking back at her. "What was your name?"

"Michelle Torin. I was an Observer on the ship Black Banshee Beta. We were shot down when surveying this canyon."

"It's that ship we saw a week ago, the one the Blues shot down." Grif added.

"_That_ ship?" Sarge inquired, confused.

"Yes," Torin answered, "I think I'm the only one who survived. Otherwise, someone from the ship would have picked up on my signal by nowâ€¦"

"Wait, signal?" Sarge now sounded a bit suspicious.

"My shield emits an energy pattern recognizable by the main frame computer on my ship. Someone would have come after me by now."

"Then, I guess you're stuck with us, huh?" Grif asked. Once more, the sound of his voice suggested that he was smirking.

"Until I am able to get ahold of Commandâ€¦"

"Then why not just radio 'em?" Sarge then inquired.

Torin paused. "This is no-man's land when it comes to Commandâ€¦ their radio signals won't reach down onto the surface of Haloâ€¦ That's why we weren't able to send a distress signal. Unless I'm able to figure out a way around thatâ€¦ I'm trapped down here."

"Well," Sarge began, "that makes things interestingâ€¦"

"Would it be too much to ask if I were to stay here?" Torin asked timidly, leaning against the table she had been laying on a few minutes before. "I don't want to get involved in this war, but I really don't want to starve or die of thirst before I get the chance to be rescued."

"Hmâ€¦ I don't want you distracting Simmonsâ€¦ or Grif, I s'poseâ€¦. If ya become a problem, I can't let ya stay here."

"Isâ€| that a yes?" Torin asked. Sarge nodded. Grif, who was still standing beside the girl, murmured his approval beneath his breath as he moved a bit closer to her. "How 'bout I show you around?"

Torin's eyes shifted back to him. "â€| Thatâ€| would be very kind of youâ€|" She was unsure of her words. Grif placed a hand on her back as he made to escort her from the room. Suddenly, she gasped in pain and leaned forward on the table, clutching at her left shoulder.

"Oh yeah, forgot about thatâ€|"

"About what?" Torin panted.

"Looks like ya got shot in the shoulder. I'm guessin' it was when your ship was goin' down."

"Well, no shit, Sherlock." Slowly, Torin sat upon the table. She took a deep breath. "It didn't get infected, did it?"

"No," Grif replied, "I think what was left of your shield kept the germs out."

"That's goodâ€|"

Sarge studied the girl for a moment; judging by how many bandages she had wrapped around her shoulder, her head, her arms and legs, he made a decision. "I'm thinkin' ya shouldn't do much 'til those wounds heal. Grif, don't let her go anywhere and make sure she gets what she needs."

"I'm not gonna be her maid, am I?"

"More like a butler. Any arguments and I'll force ya ta wear that tux."

Grif recoiled. "You wouldn't!"

"I can and I will."

"There'sâ€| there's no need for that," Torin stated, rubbing her bandages.

"Well, if yer insistin'â€| Grif, tell me when Simmons gets back, I've got some business to attend to."

With that, Sarge went out through the same door he'd entered in before.

"Uhâ€|" Grif looked back at Torin, "I guess I've gotta thank ya for thatâ€| don't I?"

"No, not really, it was more of a favor to me than to you." Torin smiled, reaching behind her. She produced a silver pistol, having taken it off of her belt. She then pulled the clip out of the pouch on the front of her belt.

"Niceâ€| can I see?"

"No, I'm sorry, but I can't risk wasting my only bullets." Grif

scoffed in response. "Besides that, I can't clean it without my kit."

"You _clean_ your pistol?"

"Of course. It'll jam otherwise."

"Well, I guess that explains a couple o'thingsâ€|"

Torin paused again before continuing. "Umâ€| alrightâ€| I'm just gonna check on this thenâ€|" She turned away, a look on her face that screamed "Idiot!" as she pulled the action of her pistol back and let loose the one bullet in it. After replacing it, she began to inspecting the clip and the ammunition within it.

"Ok, what's _with_ you?"

"What?"

"You talk all weird. You've got this thing where you switch from formal to normal speech, and frankly, it's gettin' annoying."

"Well, perhaps you should try getting used to it. I was taught to speak in a formal manner while on my ship; that's a difficult thing toâ€| unlearn."

"Yeah, well, that's not how things work around here."

"So I've heardâ€|"

Silence fell over the pair for a moment as Torin turned away. Suddenly, her stomach growled. She blushed, looking away, an arm around her torso.

"I guess I have to get you food, don't I?" Grif asked, his eyes narrowing.

"That would be niceâ€|"

"Anything you want?"

"Youâ€| don't have any chicken, or something like that, do you?"

Grif paused. "Yeeeeeeeahâ€| no.â€| We have Oreos."

"â€| That isn't it, is it?"

"Well, there's that weird green thing at the bottom of the fridgeâ€|."

"â€| I'll go with the Oreos."

2. Peeping Toms and Promises

The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle
> Chapter 2: Peeping Toms and Promises
 Heaven Sent Tenshi

As soon as Simmons returned, he was introduced to Torin.

"Nice to meet you, Private Simmons," she greeted, holding her bleeding shoulder. Twenty minutes earlier, her bullet wound began to bleed through the bandages.

"Likewise." Simmons held out his right hand to shake. Torin removed her hand from her shoulder then paused, looking down at it. It was covered in blood.

"Sorryâ€¦ Iâ€¦ uhâ€¦"

"Don't worry, that's ok. Maybe I should change those bandages for you."

"That might be a good ideaâ€¦" Torin shifted on the table, looking down at her bandages as Simmons began to search for fresh wraps in a compartment below the table.

"Does it hurt?"

"Yeahâ€¦ but it's more of a dull ache nowâ€¦"

"That's goodâ€¦" Simmons rose to his feet again, laying the bandages on the table. "Uhâ€¦ I'll say this as professionally as I canâ€¦ butâ€¦ I'llâ€¦ uhâ€¦ need you toâ€¦ take off your shirtâ€¦"

Suddenly, Grif was at Simmons' side. "So, uh, you need help changin' those bandages?"

"No, Grif, I don't. Go somewhere else, you're makin' her nervous."

Indeed, Torin had her face pointed down as she attempted to hide her horrendous blush.

"No I'm not, lemme help!"

"Grif, get outta here!" Simmons shoved Grif aside.

"Fine, fine! I'm goin'â€¦ Assâ€¦"

Simmons sighed as the guy in orange exited through one of the doors.

"I'm sorry about thatâ€¦" he murmured. Torin nodded. "You don't have to take your shirt all the way off, just enough so I can get to your shoulder." Torin nodded again, unbuttoning the first three buttons of her shirt, slipping her left arm carefully out of her sleeve to give Simmons access to the soiled bandages. Slowly, he began to unwrap the strips of cloth. "If ya feel uncomfortable, lemme know."

"You mean more so than I do now?"

"Sorryâ€¦ but you really do need to keep clean bandages on thisâ€¦ it could get infectedâ€¦"

"Yeah, I knowâ€¦"

Suddenly, Simmons paused, looking back at the door Grif had exited

through. "Just a secâ€¦" He pulled out his pistol and fired four shots at the wall.

"HEY!" Grif screamed, "God damnit, that last one just about hit me!" He peered round the corner at the pair.

"That was the point."

"Fine!"

Grif sulked away as Simmons turned to pick up the fresh wraps on the table.

"He's such an idiotâ€¦"

"So I've noticedâ€¦" Simmons laughed under his breath as he began to wrap the new bandages around Torin's shoulder.

"Thank you," she muttered as he finished, slipping her arm into her sleeve and buttoning her shirt up again.

"No problem. Soâ€¦ how long d'ya think you'll be here for?"

"I dunnoâ€¦ a while, I thinkâ€¦ at least until I can reach Commandâ€¦"

"How d'ya plan on doin' that?"

"â€¦ I â€¦" Torin sighed, "have absolutely no ideaâ€¦"

Simmons paused. "I could help youâ€¦ if ya want."

"Wellâ€¦ Sarge asked that I didn't get in the wayâ€¦"

"Half the time we just stand around doin' nothin', anyway."

Torin smiled. "I would appreciate any help you have to offer."

"Then I'll start looking into frequencies. If I find anything I'll let y'know."

"Thank youâ€¦." Torin turned away, fiddling with the bullet hole in her shirt.

"Torin!" She looked up to find Sarge in the doorway behind her.

"There ya are; where've ya been?" he demanded.

"â€¦ I haven't moved since I got here, Sir."

"That's beside the point. Here." Sarge handed Torin a small device.

"It's a radio; you'll need it if y'wanna contact usâ€¦"

"Ohâ€¦ thank you."

"â€¦ And also for your assignment."

"Waitâ€¦ what?" Torin looked up from the headset she held in her hand. "Assignment? I've told you, I want no part in this frivolous war of yours!"

"Ya won't be fightin', you'll just be doin' a bit ofâ€¦ well, you're an '_Observer_', aren't ya? You'll just be _observing_ the Blue Team for a while."

"Sir, when I say I don't want to be involved, I mean by all aspects of the phrase!"

"D'ya wanna stay here or not?"

"You said the only condition for my staying here was that I didn't bother the others!"

"Well, things changed. You wanna stay here, don't ya?"

"Yes, but not if that means being involved in this mindless bloodshed!"

"This isn't 'mindless bloodshed', this is _war_, Missy!"

"It's all the same to me!"

"Look, you're the only one here the Blues won't recognize. It'll be safe and it'll be easy. All ya haf ta do is sneak up to the Blue Base and tell us what they're doin'."

"Sir," Simmons began, "Permission to speak freely."

Sarge turned to him. "Fine, what?"

"If the Blues see her, won't they be tempted to take her prisoner?"

"'Course not! How'll _they_ know she's on _our_ team?"

"They will, if they have any sense," Torin retorted.

"In that caseâ€¦" Grif began, leaning against the wall beside the door he entered through again, "you'll be fine. I doubt those idiots'll even _notice_ you."

"Grif's right," Sarge looked back at Torin, "though I hate to admit it. Just go in there, get a good look at what they're doin', radio us back with the information, and we'll take it from there."

"Sir," Simmons turned to Sarge, "what exactly do you plan on doing?" Sarge didn't reply but stared blankly at the soldier in maroon. The group in the room knew he had no clue what to do yet.

Torin sighed. She looked down at the device in her hand then back up at the soldiers. "From what I can tellâ€¦ it seems I haven't much choice in this matterâ€¦. I'll help you, but only on one condition."

"Great," Sarge sighed in relief, "What is it?"

"That I am not forced to do anymore of this." Torin paused. "And that I am allowed sufficient time to heal the wounds I've acquired from that crash."

"I dunno how much time I can give yaâ€¦ but you'll feel better when

the time comes. We got a deal?" Sarge held out his hand to shake. Torin peered down at it. She paused again before taking his hand in her bloodied one.

3. The Military Operation

A/N:

Alright, first off, I'd like to thank my three reviewers, Dman, Pink Skittles, and Mr. 125. Thank you!

Also, I would like to address something. One, Grif and Simmons' names are spelled correctly; this is according to several sources, the official Red VS Blue website (look under the cast section), episode 0 (which I found on and the opening sequences of the first and fourth season DVDs (that's all I've got, unfortunately).

Lastly, I would like to apologize for the "humor" of my fanfiction. First off, it's thin and sorta dry. Secondly, a couple of the jokes have been spin-offs of some of the jokes in Red VS Blue. The last jokes of the first chapter were from the conversation between the Red Team when Donut was asked about his diet. The Oreos part was sorta obvious. The other part was not so obvious. When Grif referred to the green thing at the bottom of the fridge, it was supposed to be a spin-off of the fact that Grif didn't know what asparagus was. Butâ€| yeah.

Anyway, on that happy note, enjoy.

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The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle
> Chapter 3: The Military Operation
 Heaven Sent Tenshi

The next few days dragged on at a murderously slow pace for Torin. She spent her time toying with her radio, attempting to tune into various frequencies. She failed in reaching Command, however. When she wasn't doing this, she was either being annoyed by Grif or attempting to block out the pain in her shoulder. Luckily for her, pain medication was nonexistent at Blood Gulch Outpost Number One.

The frail girl sighed, throwing herself at the wall of the Base and sliding down to the dirt. The sun scorched the dying grass, beating down upon her as well. She shaded her eyes as she stared at the canyon wall in front of her. She rarely went outside, but, today, she felt she needed to be as far away from the others as she dared go. That place was here, behind the Base.

Sighing again, Torin pulled the small communication device off her ear, toying with the knob on the earpiece. Suddenly, she stopped, closing her eyes. The face of the communications officer of the Black Banshee appeared before her. He was smiling; he always smiled at her. She shook her head violently. 'No,' she told herself, 'don't dwell on something that never existed in the first place. It was fate; you had no chance with him and he never had a chance against that bullet.'

She rubbed her face with her arm, pulled her knees up to her chest

and rested her head on them. She held her breath to smother the sob that threatened to escape her. The sound of her heartbeat echoed in her ears. She held her breath until her lungs felt like they would burst. Slowly, she let the air out her nose and then back in again on the same path. She didn't want to move.

"Y'know what I realized?" That was Grif's voice, Torin concluded.

"No, and I don't think I wanna knowâ€¦"

'Oh, great, another Simmons-Grif argument atop the base,' she thought. She decided to ignore it, but the only noise in the canyon proved difficult to block out.

"There's nothin' out hereâ€¦"

"I know, Grif, we talked about this yesterdayâ€¦"

"No, Man, seriously; I never really see any birds, even though I can hear 'emâ€¦ but stillâ€¦ it's like there's _nothing_ out hereâ€¦"

"Oh my Godâ€¦"

"_Nothing_. Y'know what I mean?"

"_Yes_, we talked abou-"

"No squirrels, no groundhogs, just a few bugsâ€¦"

"Will you just shut up, Grif?"

"It's like there's no ecosystem."

"Do you even know an ecosystem is?"

"No, but I know there isn't one out here."

Simmons sighed in frustration as Torin tried hard not to laugh. Quickly, she scrambled to her feet and skittered back into the base. Simmons turned away from his teammate. Something caught his eye. "I think she's been spying on usâ€¦" he murmured. Grif looked over.

"Who?"

"Torin. She was right down there." He motioned to the edge of the base where she had once been sitting.

"She digs me," Grif stated blatantly.

"What? She does not."

"Oh yeah? Prove it."

"I don't think I need to, it's pretty obvious."

"Obvious?" Grif scoffed.

"You _do_ know what obvious m-"

"Yes, I know what it means!"

"Then you should know I'm right."

Grif scoffed again as he made toward the ramp that lead to ground level.

"Where're you doing?" Simmons demanded. "Sarge told us to watch for the Blues in case they decide to attack us before we-"

"The Blues aren't gonna attack us," Grif murmured. Simmons was vaguely reminded of the conversation they had had the day they had found Torin. "Besides," Grif disappeared down the ramp, "I'll be back." As he began to advance around the Base, a bullet was driven into the ground near his feet. "What the hell!" Grif turned his visor skyward to find Simmons standing over him with his assault rifle at the ready.

"Get back up here; you're not stalking her today. Sarge ordered me to put a bullet in your helmet if you tried it."

"Sarge said this, Sarge ordered that! Screw what Sarge says!" This time, the bullet ricocheted off of Grif's shield. "OW! Dammit!" A barrage of bullets riddled the ground at his feet, chasing him up the ramp. "God _dammit_, Simmons!"

"Maybe you should try listening to me."

"You're an Ass," Grif growled, his head appearing over the lip of the ramp.

"_You're_ the one stalking Torin."

"I'm not _stalking_ her!"

"Oh yeah, then what do _you_ _call_ it?"

As Grif shot his retort at his teammate, Torin curled up on her bed. She stared blankly at the wall in front of her as she lay on her right side. How long would she be forced to deal with this madness?

She still cradled her radio in her hand. If only she could reach commandâ€¦ then this nightmare would end. She sighed, carefully rolling onto her back.

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A knock echoed in Torin's room. She rolled over, opening her eyes. 'Must've fallen asleep,' she concluded. Groggily, she sat up. "Yeah?"

The door of her bedroom slid to her right. Simmons was standing on the other side. "Got a delivery for ya." He tossed the small box in his hand to her. She nearly missed it as she ducked and threw her hand into the air. When it connected with her skin, she wrapped her fingers around it. Slowly, she looked up, bringing the box in front of her. It was black with three buttons on the front; the big one in

the middle was green, the two on the outside were of a similar, smaller size, though the one on the left was blue and the other was red. She also noticed a crack down the middle that looked to have been filled with some sort of epoxy.

"Is this my shield mechanism?" she inquired, looking up. Simmons nodded. "I thought I'd lost itâ€¦"

"Nah, Sarge repaired it for you. He figured if you were gonna go out there you needed a bit of protection."

"Well, thank him for me, would you?" She yawned, setting her shield on the table beside her where her belt and accessories lay.

"Yeah, sure."

"Oh, and thank you for bringing it to me." Torin smiled to him as she began to lie down again. "Did you find a way to reach my commanding officers?"

"Hm?" Simmons paused for a moment, thinking. "Oh, no, I haven't. I must've tried thirty different frequencies, but I didn't hear anything."

"Alrightâ€¦ thanks for tryingâ€¦"

Simmons nodded again. A question lingered on his tongue, but he thought against asking it. He could inquire about the events of that afternoon at a different time. "I'll just leave you to your nap thenâ€¦"

"Good ideaâ€¦" Her voice trailed off as she rolled over and Simmons turned to disappear through the door.

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Torin hadn't expected Sarge to approach her so soon; a mere week had passed. Her bullet wound had long ceased bleeding and was healing over, but her shoulder remained tender. Many of the cuts on her body turned to scabs, though she insisted on wearing many of her bandages. She had ventured outside once more, sitting against the wall of the Base when Sarge suddenly appeared above her.

"Torin, get up here," he ordered. She sighed as she rose to her feet and ascended the ramp to the roof.

"What is it, Sir?" she asked.

"It's time." Sarge turned to face the Blue base.

Torin paused. She closed her eyes, turning away. "Oh greatâ€¦" she murmured.

"The Blues've been milling around on their roof; I think they're plannin' somethin'â€¦ I want ya over thereâ€¦"

She nodded, sighing again. "Alrightâ€¦"

Sarge didn't look back. "I'd send someone with yaâ€¦ but I don't wanna run the risk of yer gettin' caught. We'll be back here; when ya

get up there close enough to see anything, radio us." Another nod. She turned and made for the ramp. "Oh," Sarge turned toward her, "here, you'll need these." Torin returned to the officer as he handed her a pair of small, black binoculars. "Don't get too close and don't get caught."

Torin assented again, leaving the Base. Sarge stood beside the teleporter, watching her as she departed. The remainder of the Red Team hurried up the opposite ramp.

"She didn't leave already, did she?" Grif asked as he walked the last few steps to the other side of the teleporter.

"Yeahâ€|" Sarge began, "Can't believe she's doin' itâ€| y'know, I'd'a let her stay here even if she didn't goâ€|"

"What?" Simmons looked over at the Sergeant. "Then why did you push the issue so far, Sir?"

"I heard her givin' in; I figured if I pushed just far enough, I'd get her t'do it. And it worked." He chuckled softly to himself.

"Permission to speak freely, Sir," Grif requested.

Sarge sighed in frustration, "_What_"

"That's sadistic. You pretty much just sent her to her death."

"We already discussed this, Private . She'll be fine." With that, Sarge leapt down from the roof. "Simmons; get the other sniper rifle, watch her and relay any important details to me." He hurried over to the dead tree in front of the Base, leaped onto one of the branches and scanned the area with his own rifle.

Torin hurried through the shadows cast by the cliffs. She journeyed below the bluffs until she came to one of the entrances into the caves. She made her way around the large rock that stood in her path and continued around a large hill. Surrounding her on three sides were cliffs. She had entered the large recess in the wall where the Red teleporter came out. She thought for a split second that it would have been much faster to go that way. Shrugging it off, she continued to the wall in front of her. She could very well have gone through the caves, but, from what she had heard from Simmons, that would have been a dangerous route. The exit on the Blues' side was in the open, she would have been spotted right away.

She crouched as she came to the wall. There was a bit of diagonal ground that provided a safe hiding spot, as far as she could tell. Slowly, she lowered herself down onto the dirt. She ran her hand over her belt. Shield, check. Pistol, check. Binoculars, check. Good. Everything seemed in place. She took a deep breath, lowered herself to the ground even further and peeked around the mound that served as her hiding spot. There, in the open, was the Blue Base. It looked exactly like the Red Base, save the fact that the color of the lights and paint was different.

&&&&

A soldier in regulation blue armor hurried up a ramp to one in cyan.

The second soldier was standing beside one of the large, flat, concrete pylon-like structures with a blue symbol painted on it.

"Captain Flowers," Tucker began, causing the officer to turn around, "Church says he saw some movement out of the Reds."

Flowers nodded. "Then I was rightâ€¦ I suppose they're up to somethingâ€¦ What sort of movement, Private Tucker?"

"I dunno; Church said that someone left their Base, two of 'em are on the roof and their Sergeant's in a tree."

"Hmâ€¦" Flowers turned away to look out into the canyon. "They could possibly be organizing an attackâ€¦" He paused while in thought. Suddenly, he looked up. "Waitâ€¦ what you told me didn't add upâ€¦ there are only three soldiers at the Blue Base."

"Yeah, Church said that the one that left wasn't dressed in armor; might've been a new Marine. He's not sure, he couldn't see well enough."

"Where is he?"

"Church or the Marine?"

"The Marine."

"Church lost sight of him as soon as he left; I guess he disappeared in some shadows or somethin'."

"Oddâ€¦ Private Tucker, I want you to go to Private Church and tell him to keep an eye on them. If anymore movement arises, I would like to hear of it."

The soldier in blue nodded and hurried down the ramp. He jogged up an incline and made his way along the cliffs. Soon, he came up behind Church as he overlooked a recess in the canyon and watched the Red Base.

"Same orders as before, Church," he murmured, causing the soldier in cobalt blue to sigh. "He wants me to play messenger boy for your two."

"Yeah, whatever, justâ€¦ go stand over there somewhereâ€¦"

"Oh, I feel _real_ appreciatedâ€¦"

"Good. Now shut up, you're breaking my concentration." Church lifted the sniper rifle in his hands up and peered through the scope.

&&&&

Simmons frowned, lowering his rifle.

"What's up?" Grif asked, turning from him to the canyon.

"She's goneâ€¦ Hmâ€¦" Simmons turned his radio on. "She's out of sight, Sir. I can't see Torin."

"I lost her, too," Sarge replied, "We'll just have to wait."

&&&&&

Torin sighed, turning so that her back rested against the mound of dirt. She was having second thoughts again. Beyond this place, there was no hidden spot. This was as close as she would be able to get; though, there was always the chance that they would spot her from this position as well.

She took a deep breath; she had to get a peek. Carefully, she pulled the binoculars off her belt and rose to her knees. She raised her head over the top of the mound and peered through the glasses. There was only one soldier visible to her. He stood atop the Blue Base and looked to be staring at the canyon. She prayed she couldn't see her as she sunk down onto the ground again.

Torin pressed a small button on her radio and fiddled with the knob until she heard Sarge's voice. He was saying something about waiting. She frowned.

"Sir, I don't see much."

Sarge sounded startled. "Huh? Torin?" He took a moment to regain composure as he cleared his throat. "Whad'dya mean?"

"I can only see one soldier at Blue Base. He's standing on the roof and watching the canyon"

"What color armor?"

"Teal-ish"

Grif suddenly cut in. "You're doin' that speech thing again."

Simmons elbowed the orange soldier as he, Sarge, and Torin all shouted for Grif to shut up.

&&&&&

Church looked up from the scope. He turned to Tucker. "You hear that?"

"Yeah," the other began, "sounded like it came from down there." He motioned to the ground below the cliff on which they stood. Church nodded, approaching the edge and easing his head over.

&&&&&

Sarge turned away from the base to continue his conversation with Torin. "The one on the roof is their captain. Where're the other two?"

"Like I said I can only see the one." She turned to face the Blue Base with her binoculars again.

"Then come back. We'll get this all-

"Sir!" Simmons broke in, "Blue on the move!"

"What?" Sarge turned to Red Base again. "Where?"

"Near the teleporter exit. He's on the cliffs."

"The teleporter exit?" Torin asked, looking back at them as well. "But, that's where I-" The sound of someone landing on the ground near her caused her to freeze.

"He jumped," Simmons continued. "I think he's on the ground now. I can't see, though; that hill's in the way."

"Torin," Sarge began, "can ya see anyone in blue armor near ya?"

"â€| Yesâ€|" came her answer. Torin had pressed herself against the ground as she stared up Church's pistol barrel.

"Give me your radio," Church instructed, holding out a hand. Torin swallowed hard as she lifted her hand up to her ear.

"You do?" Sarge continued, "Where?" There was a click and Sarge heard no answer from the girl. "Torin? Torin! I order you to answer me!"

"Sir, I think her radio's offâ€|" Simmons murmured; worry was an undertone of his voice.

Just before Sarge was able to reply to the maroon soldier, Grif interrupted: "Uh, guysâ€| _Look_." He motioned to the hill behind which Torin had been hiding. She was being steered toward the Blue Base by a soldier in cobalt armor. Another soldier in regulation blue leapt down from the cliff and joined the two.

Sarge paused. "Oh, for the love o'-" He cut himself off as he hopped down from the tree and joined Simmons and Grif on the roof. "I told her _not_ to get caughtâ€|"

"Yeah," Grif began, turning to look at him, "you also told her she'd be fine. Looks like neither of you kept your promises."

Grif wouldn't remember what happened next, save the fact that there was a pain in his neck and everything went black.

4. Torin's Turmoil

The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle
> Chapter 4: Torin's Turmoil
 Heaven Sent Tenshi

The first thing Grif could hear was Sarge congratulating Simmons on a well placed hit. Confused, the orange soldier sat up, holding his head.

"Godâ€| what happenedâ€|? Who hit me in the back of my headâ€|?"

"That doesn't matter, Grif," Simmons hissed, turning toward the

canyon, "We should begin formulating a plan to save Torin."

"Exactly what I was gonna say," Sarge announced, "Good work, Simmons."

"Thank you, Sir."

"Ughâ€¦ you two are gonna give me a bigger headache," Grif groaned, rising to his feet. Sarge and Simmons glared in his direction.

&&&&

Torin was sitting on the ground of the Blue Base with her knees pulled up to her chest, glaring with contempt at Church, who stood in front of her. She had finally found the opportunity to activate her shield, just before they noticed she had it. They had confiscated her pistol, but her ammunition remained with her. Tucker was standing beside her. He and Church had been trying to find a weak spot in her shield for three minutes straight, though without success.

"Alright," Church began, annoyance thick in his voice, "I'm getting sick of his real fast. Deactivate your forceâ€¦fieldâ€¦ thing, or we'll turn it off for you." His weak threat was intensified as he pointed his pistol at her.

"This shield will not go down until I press the correct button."

"Yeah, ya said that five minutes ago," Tucker murmured. Church turned to him, throwing him a glare.

"Tucker, what'd I tell you earlier?"

He sighed. "Don't talk to the prisonerâ€¦"

"And what the fuck did you just do?"

"Talked to the prisonerâ€¦"

"Get outta here, will ya!"

"Now, now, Private Church," Flowers appeared behind the aforementioned soldier suddenly, "that wasn't a very kind thing to say to Private Tucker. He has just as much of a right to converse with our guest as you do."

"Guest? Sir-"

"Churchâ€¦"

"â€¦ Captainâ€¦" Church sighed in frustration, "She isn't our guestâ€¦ she's our prisoner."

"Prisonerâ€¦" Flowers shook his head, "that's such a strong word, isn't it?"

Church sighed loudly in frustration. "Whateverâ€¦ Maybe you should deal with her thenâ€¦" Church then took the opportunity to disappear

from the room. Flowers shook his head again, turning toward Torin.

"I really am sorry about himâ€¦ I think the war is beginning to get to him." Torin didn't reply to his apology; instead, she crossed her arms and turned away. "â€¦ Perhaps we've gotten off on the wrong footâ€¦? I am Captain Flowers. This is Private Tucker." Tucker waved. "And what is your name?"

"I do not believe that that matters at the momentâ€¦" Torin growled, "Introductions are frivolous in a time such as this."

"I wouldn't say that," Flowers interjected, "Introductions are the basis of any friendship."

"_Friendship_? You have captured me and are holding me against my will; that's not any way to gain a friend!"

"Your capture is regrettable; this is a time of war; but that doesn't mean we can't all get along here."

"Think what you will." Torin set her chin upon her knees again, closing her eyes. "â€¦ But that will not change my opinion of you or your murderous team."

"Murderous?" Flowers sounded surprised. "I don't think we've killed anyone in this canyon."

"Not in the canyonâ€¦"

"Please, explain."

Torin paused, biting her lip. "â€¦ Your team shot down a shipâ€¦" Tucker's head recoiled as he bit his lip as well. "A black shipâ€¦ a ship of innocent bystandersâ€¦ And you killed nearly everyone aboardâ€¦"

"What?" Now Flowers was really confused. "I don't recallâ€¦" His voice trailed off as he turned to Tucker. "Private Tuckerâ€¦ can you explain to me what she is talking about?"

Tucker laughed nervously. "Wellâ€¦ y'see, Captainâ€¦ itâ€¦ uhâ€¦ Church did it!"

"Private Church shot a ship down all on his own? Without my knowing?"

"â€¦ Yesâ€¦?"

"Tuckerâ€¦ are you sure you're telling me the truth?"

He hesitated. "â€¦ No, Sir- I meanâ€¦ Cappyâ€¦"

"What happened, then?"

"Well, when Church saw that ship, he figured it had reinforcements on it for the Redsâ€¦ he convinced me to help him shoot it downâ€¦"

"There, doesn't it feel better to tell the truth?"

"Yeahâ€¦ I guessâ€¦"

"That's goodâ€¦ now, could you please ask Private Church to return in here again?" Tucker assented, exiting the room. Torin, meanwhile, buried her face in her arms. She didn't want to be apart of this conversation. "Soâ€¦ have you decided to tell me your name?" Flowers asked in a sincere voice.

"It's Torin." Slowly, she lifted her head up. "I was on that ship they shot downâ€¦ the Black Banshee Betaâ€¦ I was the only one to surviveâ€¦"

"Allow me to apologize on Church's behalf, then. What he did was a terrible thing." Torin looked away again.

&&&&

Grif leaned against the wall of the canyon as Sarge gave the signal to stop. "Geeze, was it really that necessary to run the whole way here?" His breathing had turned ragged.

"Yes, Grif," Sarge began, "and if ya keep yappin' about it, I'll put this here shotgun shell in yer helmet." He reloaded the gun in his hands. Grif scoffed but thought against replying. "Alright," Sarge turned toward the Blue Base and then back to the other two of his group. "This was the place Torin was captured. Grif, go look for clues."

"Clues? What clues? We saw her walk off with that blue guy! And he had a gun to her back!"

"We don't know that for sure."

"We saw it through the scope of the sniper rifle!"

"Just get up there!"

Grif scoffed again, then turned in his frustration and started up the slope behind the trio. Simmons watched him leave before turning to Sarge.

"Think he'll come back?"

"I hope notâ€¦ all apart of the plan." Sarge chuckled.

"So, what now, Sir?"

"Well, we storm the base and rescue Torinâ€¦. That's about all I've got."

"Storm the base? Two on three?"

"Yeah, it's the perfect planâ€¦"

"Uh, yes, Sir. I can't wait to execute itâ€¦" Simmons' eyes drifted nervously over toward the Blue Base. 'We're gonna dieâ€¦'

&&&&

Torin stared at the wall in front of her as Tucker continued to watch her. "Do you have nothing better to do?" she questioned beneath her breath. The soldier jumped.

"Uh, what?"

"Do you have nothing better to do than stare at me?"

Tucker blinked several times. "Well, I'm supposed to be guarding youâ€|"

"Yes, but that does not mean you cannot take your eyes off meâ€|"
Tucker smirked. Torin could almost sense it. She rose to her feet suddenly. "Do that again, I dare you."

Tucker took a step back. "What?"

"Smirk again, I dare you." Her eyes shot toward him. She prayed this would work. "Or, are you already afraid of what I might do?"
Confused, Tucker stared at her for a moment. He was about to pull his pistol out, but thought better of it and instead armed himself with his assault rifle. Torin cocked her head to the side. "What are you going to do, Private Tuckerâ€|? Are you going to shoot me? Are you going to perform a stunt even you know would be ludicrous; are you really going to try to shoot a bullet-proof shield?" Her low, sneering laugh echoed off the walls.

&&&&

Grif lowered himself to the ground of the cliff, pulling his pistol out and peering through the twice magnified scope. He couldn't see much, besides a lonely base. He frowned. What did they plan to do with Torin? Or did they capture her just for the heck of it?

He lowered the pistol and looked back at the hiding place of the others below him. Sarge's head was barely visible. After debating whether or not to shoot him, Grif sat back and stared at the Blue Base again. What could he do from up here? What could Sarge and Simmons do from down there? He sighed in frustration. He had a bad feeling about everything.

&&&&

"Alright, Simmons, now that we've got everything hammered out, go out there." Sarge ducked behind the hill they stood behind as he said this. Simmons swallowed hard. He nodded, leaped over the mound of ground and pressed himself against the wall, hoping to hide among the shadows. He ran along the wall until he came to the edge of the base. His eyes shifted to and fro before waving Sarge over, seeing that the coast was clear.

As Sarge joined the other, Grif caught sight of them. He shook his head. They'd be seen, he just knew it.

The pair made their way over to the base and climbed the ramp leading to the roof. Quietly, they rested against the pillars and listened to the voices beneath them.

&&&&

Tucker's eye twitched. He didn't feel at all safe with a loon like Torin in the room. She was cute, but he wasn't about to risk it. He switched his radio on and requested Flowers to come back.

"Running to your captain?" she murmured. She laughed again. It was working; she couldn't believe it, but she was actually psyching him out. She began edging to her left, away from Tucker, toward the door leading outside. If she could just get out of the Base, she might be able to run like mad back to the Reds. "What can he do? He's as mere a man as you."

Tucker paused again. "Ok, lookâ€¦ Iâ€¦ I'll shootâ€¦ don't move anymore!" Torin froze; he'd noticed her movement.

"Do it! See what will happen! With my luck, someone other than me will end up shot." Tucker's unsteady finger rested on the trigger. 'He's actually gonna try it; the buffoon! Man, I hope Sarge didn't screw my shield upâ€¦'

"Tucker!" Flowers appeared behind him, taking his arm and lowering his rifle. "What's happened here?"

"She's gone crazy, Captain!"

"Crazy? Torin, what is heâ€¦?" He suddenly caught the false wild look in her eyes. He swallowed and took a few steps forward. "Torin, what's the matter? Are you alright?"

"What would it matter to you, Flowers? I'm just your prisonerâ€¦ petty things such as that shouldn't matter to youâ€¦" Flowers paused, looking back at Tucker and then Church, who had just entered the room. Torin took several more steps back. She was even with the hall leading to the door. If she could keep the three of them on edge for only a minute more she could escape without harm.

The girl took a deep breath, closing her eyes. Her lips cracked into a smile and just as she was about to part her eyelids in the most sinister fashion she could muster, she paused. A faint sound echoed in her ears. It was unmistakable. It was the tiny 'tink' of a grenade hitting the ground. As she opened her eyes, she saw it, laying green and threatening between her and Flowers. Her left eye twitched.

"Idiots!" she screamed pulling her arm over her head and crouching low to the ground in a protective fashion just as the explosive went off. She jerked her head upward to find Sarge and Simmons hunkered down at the edge of the opening in the ceiling. "You imbeciles!" Torin cried, lunging forward, beneath it, "You could have killed someone!"

"It wouldn't've hurt ya!" Sarge cried back, leaning over and extending his hand down to her, "You've got yer shield, don't'cha?" Torin growled beneath her breath, pressing the red button on the base of the shield, shutting it off as she took Sarge's hand with her right. Simmons leaned down and made to help her clamber up onto the roof as well. As she lifted her left arm up to take a hold of his hand, she winced and nearly cried out, remembering that her shoulder was still a bit tender. Simmons apologized as the trio ran from the Blue Base toward their own, as cries rose up from an infuriated Blue

Team and as Grif smiled a crooked smile.

"I can _not_ believe that just worked," he murmured, rising to his feet.

5. Finale

The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle

Chapter 5: Finale

Heaven Sent Tenshi

Torin was sitting on her bed, staring at the wall. She sighed; her whole ship was killed by those idiotsâ€¦ and she had allowed herself to be captured by them. Not to mention humiliated and forced to lie. She closed her eyes. Her memories were jumbled and her mind confused, but she didn't know why.

A knock awoke her to the surrounding world. She rose and opened the door to her bedroom. Simmons was on the other side. He held a bowl filled with a small amount of food; Torin never ate much anyway. He held it out to her.

"Thought I'd bring you something to eat." Torin nodded in thanks, taking the bowl. She then returned to her bed, not bothering to ask Simmons to leave or to come in. She silently picked at the morsels in the dish as he stood in the doorway, unable to decide whether to stay or go. Soon, the soldier in maroon looked over at her. "Soâ€¦ why haven't you been up? Seems like you've just shut yourself away in hereâ€¦"

"I don't want to be a botherâ€¦"

"You're not a botherâ€¦"

"I would be if I were to go upstairsâ€¦ My mood and reserved attitude will not be looked upon as pleasantâ€¦"

"â€¦ You don't have to act like thatâ€¦ I meanâ€¦" Simmons sighed in frustration. He wasn't sure how to make her feel any better or what to say. "Just, don't stay down here foreverâ€¦" With that, he turned and left the doorway. The door soon closed, leaving Torin alone in the dark she had retreated to earlier that afternoon. She sighed again, laying down on the bed and resting the bowl on her stomach. She reached into the dish, produced a few more pieces of food, and ate them before placing it on the table beside her. She turned to lay full-length on the bed before shutting her eyes.

Simmons looked back at her door before sighing and disappearing upstairs. He found Grif waiting there.

"Why do you keep goin' down there?" the orange soldier asked suddenly. Simmons looked up, startled.

"What? Why do _you_ need to know?"

"Just curiousâ€¦" Grif was lying and Simmons could hear it.

"No you're not; you have a reason, tell me!"

"You like her, don'chya?"

"What?!" Simmons took a step back, making sure he didn't look at Grif's visor, inevitably avoiding eye contact. "I do _not_!"

"Yeah right; Simmons likes Torin," he added in a sing-song voice as he smirked inside his helmet.

"Shut up! You don't even know the situation!"

"What _situation_? You've liked her since she got here!"

"I have not!"

"Then why do you keep protesting it?"

"Because it isn't true, Jackass."

"And now you're calling me names, _and_ you won't look at me. I'm right, you're wrong; I win!"

Simmons' face flushed with embarrassment. He knew Grif was right, but he wasn't about to let _him_ know that. "How d'you even know I'm not looking at you? You can't see through my visor."

"Then take off your helmet, look me straight in the eye and tell me you don't like her." Grif was grinning again.

Simmons scoffed. "I don't have to do _anything_; there's nothing to prove and you're certainly not worth proving it to."

"You're just saying that because you know you can't do it."

"Will you just _shut up_, Grif?!"

"Whateverâ€¦ I guess if you _really_ don't like her, then you won't mind if I ask her outâ€¦" Grif pushed his way passed Simmons as he made for the ladder. Simmons' eyes widened a bit.

"You're what? You can't do that!"

"And why's that, _lover boy_?" The next thing Grif saw was Simmons diving him while he, himself, shrieked. The orange soldier scrambled away and stood upright again. "_Now_ you're resulting to physical violence. Just admit it!"

Simmons stood next to the ladder, fuming. After a moment, he scoffed and jumped down to the lower floor. He then walked off to his room.

"What in blazes is goin' on down here?!" Sarge called as he entered the room.

"Nothin'. Simmons' just being an idiot; as usualâ€¦"

"Well, keep it down, I'm tryin' to watch for the Blues, in case they-"

"'â€| try to attack the Base.' Yeah, yeah, I heard ya the first hundred times you said thatâ€|."

Sarge, disapproving of Grif's attitude, walked forward, hit him with his pistol and then headed back up to the top of the base again. Grif rubbed the spot on his helmet where he had been hit before clambering down the ladder to the lower floor.

Church growled something incoherent beneath his breath as he sank down onto one knee, propping his sniper rifle on it and looking through the scope.

"See anything?" Tucker asked, craning his neck in a failing effort to see.

"Noâ€| Guess they're all still- No, wait, I see one of 'emâ€| It's the one with the Standard Issue Red armorâ€| I think Captain Flowers said he's supposed to be the Sergeant."

"Yeah, I see himâ€| What's he doing?"

"I dunno, looks like he's looking for somethingâ€| Maybe he's a look-out."

"Why would their Sergeant be acting as a look-out?"

"_I don't know_,_ Tucker_. Maybe you should go down there and ask him yourself!"

"But wouldn't he shoot at me?"

"_Tucker_â€|"

Church was getting mad; Tucker could tell by the way the sniper rifle was shaking. Slowly, he began to edge backward until he hit the cliff face. When he did, he stopped and watched from there.

After about five minutes, Church pulled the rifle away from his eye, sitting the butt of it on the ground. Carefully, he rose to his feet. "Doesn't look like they're planning anythingâ€| Tucker, you stay here, I'm gonna go report this to the Captain."

"Why not just use your radio?"

"We might be too close; the Reds might be able to pick up on the transmission."

"They can do that?"

"â€| _I don't know_, Flowers just warned us not to."

"Well, then, do I get the sniper rifle?"

Church hesitated. He knew Tucker had never used one before, and he still wasn't sure how well he'd been trained with weapons. After a moment of consideration, he sighed. "Alright, but don't shoot anything. Just look through the scope."

"Yes!" Tucker took the rifle from Church as the latter began jogging toward Blue Base. He stroked the stock a moment before getting down

on his stomach and peering through the cross hairs. "Man, if I pulled the trigger right now, Sergeant-dude, you'd be _dead_ _meat_â€|"

Torin slid the door into the wall as she looked into the hall. It was as quiet as it was dark. She sighed, turning the bowl over in her hands as she made for the tiny kitchen near the ladder.

"So, you decided to come out?" Torin turned to find Simmons in the hallway. She blinked several times.

"Where'd you come from?"

"Uhâ€| back thereâ€|" He pointed over his shoulder to his room.

Torin sighed and rubbed her eyes. "My vision must be getting bad thenâ€| I'm surprised I didn't see you when I lookedâ€|" She smiled kindly to him before turning back to the kitchen. She entered the small room and rinsed her bowl in something that she hoped was water, though, the consistency didn't seem right to her. She shrugged it off, praying she wouldn't mysteriously become sick within the next few days.

As Torin finished, she wiped her hands on a towel. Meanwhile, Simmons leaned against the doorframe. "I could have done that for youâ€|" he offered.

"Thanks, but," she pressed her finger to her lips, "if I didn't use that as an excuse, I wouldn't have come out of my roomâ€| Don't tell anyone, ok?" Simmons smiled and nodded.

With that out of the way, Torin exited the room, brushing past the maroon soldier and started up the ladder. Simmons waited for her to reach the top. As she did so, he followed her up. And, while _he_ did _that_, Grif poked his head out of his room. He smirked. What better way to completely embarrass Simmons than to confront him in front of Torin? How utterly perfect; he couldn't pass up the chance.

Torin stopped when she entered the main room of the base. Turning around, she offered Simmons help out of the hole where the ladder was crammed, but he politely refused and clambered out on his own. She giggled.

"Never want any help, do you?" she asked, a smile on her face. Simmons was glad to see she was feeling better.

"Guess notâ€|" he murmured. An instant later, he turned to face the ladder. Grif's head had appeared in the hole. "Grif, what're you doing?"

"Nuthin'," he replied, "What're _you_ two doing?"

"Getting fresh air," Torin replied dismissively as she made for the back entrance. Simmons paused, watching her leave.

"And _you_?" Grif pried. Simmons exited the room, murmuring, "Dumb Ass," under his breath. Grif grinned as he chuckled. "Got ya right where I want yaâ€|" Hurriedly, he tried to exit the hole, but caught his foot on one of the rungs of the ladder and fell on his

face.

Meanwhile, Torin strolled outside with Simmons right behind her. "Ever notice how the weather around here never changes?" she inquired as she leaned against the wall of the base. Indeed, the sun was always out with a perfect view of the moons. It was always warm and bright. This troubled Torin slightly, who had grown accustomed to varying weather patterns.

"Yeahâ€|" Simmons nodded, "No idea whyâ€| it's strangeâ€|" Torin smiled again and slid down to the ground.

"Too warmâ€|"

Simmons nodded again.

Tucker spotted movement to his right. He swung around to find the last three members of the Red Team. The insane woman was seated on the ground, with her back against the base wall. The maroon soldier was standing beside her, nodding every few moments. The orange one was barely hidden around the base, just out of sight of the other two. He frowned, what on Earth were they doing?

Sarge looked over the edge of the base. He saw the group gathered down below and frowned. Suddenly frustrated by the lack of attention to the situation, he started toward the ramp leading to them. As he did, though, he paused. Slowly, he turned his attention to the cliff that had been in his peripheral vision; movement. He snuck over to the edge near him, knelt down, and peered through the scope on her pistol. Blue armor blazed against the brown of the Earth. One of the Blues was spying on them.

Silence had fallen over Torin and Simmons. The young woman lifted her eyes to the sky and sighed. Simmons looked over and was about to say something, but stopped, a growl emitting from his throat. "Grifâ€| what the _hell_ are you _doing_?"

"What?" Grif cried, "I'm not allowed to come outside?"

"No, you just keep following us!"

"Who says I'm following you?"

"_Grif_â€|"

Torin's eyes drifted over to the annoyance with great laziness. "Do you need something, or are you just here to irritate Simmons?"

"â€| Actuallyâ€| _both_." As Grif said this, Simmons grew nervous. Grif smirked behind his visor as he continued, "Soâ€| is this your guys' first date?"

Torin leapt to her feet, her face flushed with embarrassment. "What?" she cried. Simmons, meanwhile, felt his heart shoot into his throat and his stomach turn summersaults.

"Well, you two _are_ going out, aren't you?" Grif teased. This was perfect; Simmons was so petrified with mortification that he couldn't even find his voice.

"Have you gone _mad_?" Torin inquired, "What gave you that idea?"

"What wouldn't? You two are always hanging around each other" and Simmons, here, told me he likes you"

Torin paused. Her eyes shifted over to the aforementioned soldier who stood at her left. He hadn't moved since Grif began to speak.

"What?"

Grif reached over and hugged Simmons with his right arm. "Don'chya Buddy?" He had the largest smirk on his face. Simmons' eye twitched with irritation, but his embarrassment kept him from moving and ultimately killing Grif.

" Simmons What's he talking about?" His head dipped as Torin questioned him. He couldn't say it.

"C'mon Simmons, just say it; you like her!" Simmons murmured something incoherent under his breath. "What was that? You're gonna have to speak louder than that" In the same undertone, Simmons repeated himself. "Seriously, Dude, _louder_."

" I am going to kill you, Grif"

Grif paused; that wasn't exactly what he was expecting to hear. He laughed nervously as he lifted his arm off of him and backed away a bit. Simmons turned his head to look at him; Grif knew he had a murderous look on his face. He swallowed hard and took another step back.

Before Simmons had the chance to kill Grif, however, Torin placed a hand on the maroon soldier's shoulder. He looked back and paused. "Is it true, Dick?" He looked away and sighed; that was the first time she had used his first name since he had told it to her.

"Yeah" he replied, breathlessly. Torin pulled away.

" I'm sorry, then" She took a step backward and looked down. Shaking her head, she continued, "I'm sorry I hate to say it but"

"You don't have to" Simmons held up his hand as he told her this. He knew what she was getting at; she didn't like him like he did her. "Can I ask why, though?"

" I" She took a deep breath and looked up. "I'm still healing A wound to the heart is hard to heal especially one like this" Simmons was about to say something, she could tell; probably to ask "Who?" or "What happened?" She decided to answer him before it escaped his lips. "The Communications Officer on the Black Banshee When I saw the blood I I just can't; I'm sorry, Dick"

Sarge lined up his sights carefully as he aimed at Tucker's head. "Got ya now" he chuckled as his finger squeezed the trigger. Just as he fired, his hand jerked. The bullet whizzed over the Blue's head.

As Tucker watched the odd scene below, he frowned. It seemed as if

the orange one had said something either offensive or repulsive, judging by the reaction. The girl had jumped up to her feet and turned so that her back was to Tucker as she faced the pair. He wished he could hear what was going on, until the scene had calmed down and she had touched the maroon soldier's shoulder. He sighed; he was hoping for a fight or something interesting.

A millisecond later, a bullet embedded itself into the cliff-side above him. "Son of a bitch!" he exclaimed, rolling to get out of the way, in case another one decided to try for his head. As he did so, his finger, which had been resting on the trigger guard, slipped, knocking the feather-light trigger back, firing the round in the cartridge.

Two gunshots rang out in the canyon. The first seemed to have caused the second. The group of three beside the Red Base was startled by the first; it was a pistol shot, they could hear, and it came from the top of their base. The second was cause for shock and concern; a rifle shot, from the cliffs.

Torin fell to her hands and knees while blood erupted from her chest. She was doubled over in extreme pain, clutching her hand to her large wound. She coughed and more blood covered the dirt below her.

Grif and Simmons hit the ground in a panic. As Torin fell to the ground, Simmons crawled over to her and pulled her toward the Base. His eyes scanned the cliffs around them for movement; he noticed, nearly right away, a soldier in blue armor scrambling to hide against the wall. Torin moaned in intense pain, gaining his attention again. He took her left hand, the one covering the wound, and carefully pulled it away to examine it. He gasped. It looked terrible. Blood poured from the gaping hole in her chest. She had been shot in the back and the bullet had ripped clean through, leaving her with a window through her body. He pressed her hand against it again, and picked her up.

Grif, who had been examining the cliffs with his pistol, looked back at him. "Was she hit?"

"Yeah, it's bad!" Simmons turned and rushed the bleeding Torin into the base. When Grif was satisfied that the assailant had either been shot or had fled, he turned and followed Simmons inside.

Torin was placed on the table she had been laid on when she first arrived. Her breath was coming in ragged gasps as she squinted her eyes shut and fought back tears. Simmons whispered to her that she'd be alright, but she knew otherwise. As he fished around for something—anything—to stop the bleeding, Sarge leaned over the open space in the ceiling.

"Simmons, status report!"

"Torin's been hit, Sir."

"I see that. What about Grif, was he shot too?" he asked hopefully.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Sarge, but I'm fine." Grif entered the room as Sarge pondered how long he'd allow him to stay that way.

"Torin was the only one hurtâ€¦ but it's bad, Sir."

"Hmâ€¦ Well, patch her up; those Blues were spying on us. It's time to go kick some Blue ass!"

"Normally, I'd agree with you, Sir, butâ€¦ Torin's wound can't go untreated. If we leave her aloneâ€¦ she couldâ€¦" Simmons couldn't bring himself to finish his sentence.

"Patch her up, she'll be fine. But I need the both of you up here, pronto!" Sarge disappeared again as he went to watch for a frontal assault from the Blues.

Grif looked back at Simmons. "Is it really that bad?" Simmons nodded as he rested his hand on Torin's. She was still in visible pain and the blood hadn't slowed.

"What do you think?" he asked, kneeling down to grab all manner of gauze and bandages. He sat her up as she moaned and yelped in pain. Carefully, he began to apply gauze strip after gauze strip to the entry hole in her back. He then pulled her hand away and covered the wound there with more gauze. Grif watched from afar. There was so much bloodâ€¦ so much pain on her face.

"What got hit?"

Simmons hesitated. "I think it nicked her heart and her left lungâ€¦ But I can't do anything about itâ€¦ Sarge won't give us timeâ€¦ and an air evac would be out of the questionâ€¦ she doesn't have the kind of timeâ€¦ butâ€¦ I just hope I'm wrongâ€¦" He began to wrap the gauze strips up in bandages, over top Torin's torn and bloodied blouse.

"Soâ€¦ what are you gonna do?"

"â€¦ Patch her up and hope for the bestâ€¦ that's all I can doâ€¦" Torin groaned again and tried to double over, but Simmons held her still. "Go topside, Grif; I'll be there in a minute." Grif nodded, and oddly enough, followed Simmons' order. Had he not be preoccupied with Torin, Simmons would have tried to figure out why. "Torinâ€¦?"

She uttered a short moan before opening one eye and peering at him through the haze over her sight. "â€¦ It's hard to breatheâ€¦" she murmured, laying her head on his chest plate. He nodded.

"You'll be alright, thoughâ€¦"

"You shouldn't spin me liesâ€¦ I might have a hole in my chestâ€¦ but my ears still workâ€¦"

Simmons took a deep breath. "Sarge wants me to help himâ€¦ do you think you'll be alrightâ€¦?"

"â€¦ Iâ€¦ supposeâ€¦ Butâ€¦ I don't want you to goâ€¦ I don't want to die aloneâ€¦"

"You're not gonna dieâ€¦ you have to hold on, just a bit longer; you'll get the help you needâ€¦"

"You're lying to me again!" Torin squinted her eyes shut. "Just go! I won't go anywhere!" Simmons nodded, held her a bit longer, then laid her down and left the room. She turned her head. "I can't believe this!" She moaned again and held her hand to her chest. "Why didn't I have my shield on? I should have known better! I guess you were right, Mom! my carelessness _will_ be the end of me!" She smiled warmly and shut her eyes one last time.

Church ran along the cliffs to find Tucker huddled against the canyon wall. "What in the hell happened up here?!" he screamed. Tucker looked up, grabbed the rifle and skittered over to Church, who was behind a rock formation. "Flowers started freaking out when we heard the gunshots. You've got some explaining to do."

"It wasn't my fault! I was watching them like you told me to, and then that Sergeant shot at me! I guess my finger slipped, 'cuz the next thing I knew, the sniper rifle went off."

"Well, at least you didn't hit anyone!"

"Actually!"

Church looked up, infuriated, as Tucker motioned over to the side of the Red Base. The blood was still there, presumably still warm, smothering the grass. He growled as he turned back to his comrade. "Tucker! what in the hell gave you the idea to shoot one of the Reds?! And after I told you not to!"

"It wasn't my fault, Church! Blame that Sergeant! He almost blew my head off!"

"Yeah, well, I wish he would have!" Church sighed in frustration. "C'mon, let's get outta here! you gotta tell Captain Flowers what happened." As they began their trek to the Blue Base, Church looked back Tucker. "So, who'd you shoot anyway?"

"It was that crazy chick! the one we took hostage!"

"Dude! you _do_ realize you just _shot_ the _only_ girl in this _entire_ canyon, don't you?"

Tucker stopped. He hadn't given it any thought. "You're right!" As Church stopped and turned around, Tucker held out the sniper rifle to him. "Take this, I don't want it right now!" Church obliged and started toward the Base again.

"Smooth move, Man!"

"Shut up!"

As soon as Simmons had reached the top of the Red Base, Sarge ordered them to follow him out into the canyon. They made their way over the hills until the Blue Base came into view.

"Alright, boys!" Sarge began, "Time to extract a little revenge!" The three of them loaded fresh clips into their assault rifles. Sarge then stepped forward and tossed a frag grenade onto the doorstep of the Base. Thus began a battle that would be fought to yet another standstill.

Just as it all began, though, just before the grenade went off, Simmons could have sworn he had heard a small sound come from their base. It was an odd sound, one he hadn't really heard before. "Herkâ€| blehâ€|" He chose not to pay heed to it, though, and, instead, followed Sarge's orders.

6. Epilogue

The Real Reason Tucker Doesn't Use the Sniper Rifle
> Chapter 6: Epilogue
 Heaven Sent Tenshi

It was simple, like her burial. It was just a small pile of rocks, stacked in a little pyramid. Simmons wasn't sure the grave marker would do her any justice, but he supposed it was more than what the other members of the Black Banshee Beta had received. He sighed, kneeling down on the right side of the freshly dug grave. He placed a single daisy on the rocks; the only flora he had managed to find in the whole of the canyon. As Simmons preoccupied himself with Torin's grave, Grif snuck up behind him.

"Hey, Manâ€|" he greeted solemnly, "You gonna be ok?"

Simmons nodded as he rose to his feet again. "Yeahâ€| I'll be fineâ€|" He turned and started toward the base, his head tilted down as he walked.

&&&&

"And I'm surprised they haven't pulled your weapons privileges," Church continued, "I mean, seriously, Tucker, she wasn't even a hostileâ€|"

"She seemed pretty hostile when she was _here_â€|"

"Yeah, but she wasn't being aggressive toward you _at the time_â€| I'm just saying you're lucky."

Tucker sighed in exasperation as he lowered himself onto the Blue Base's roof. "Look, I feel bad already, d'ya have to rub it in?"

"I'm not trying to rub it in, Tucker, I just-" Church stopped when the roar of an aircraft filled the canyon. A large shadow fell over the pair as their eyes lifted to the sky. Indeed, an airliner reminiscent of a Pelican soared overhead. It turned and hovered over the middle of the canyon before floating over to the caves near the Red Base. Church spun around to face Tucker. "You thinkin' what I am?"

"â€| DÃ©jÃ vu?"

Church nodded.

&&&&

Sarge jogged out of the base, shielding his visor from the glare of the sun as he watched the aircraft touch down near the caves. Grif wandered outside as well, coming up beside him.

"What is _that_ thing?" he questioned, cocking an eyebrow.

"Well, it doesn't look like any military issued aircraft I've ever seenâ€¦ Perhaps it has something to do with that wily Blue Teamâ€¦?"

"Uhâ€¦ or, they're lost and looking for directions back to civilizationâ€¦" Sarge snorted in Grif's direction as he pulled out his assault rifle, just in case. He then began his approach of the aircraft. Grif inspected the side of the ship before pausing. He looked back at the Base. "Hey, Simmons, get out here!"

"I told you to leave me alone, Grif!" Simmons shouted back at the soldier. He still refused to leave the Base, except for his visits to Torin's grave.

"You might wanna see this!"

Simmons, frustrated, appeared in the doorway. "What? An airplane? Whopty-fucking-do. I don't care." He turned to go inside again as Grif called to him once more.

"Look at the name on the ship!"

Simmons growled as he turned around. His eyes scanned the side of the craft. He froze. "â€¦ Black Bansheeâ€¦ Alphaâ€¦?"

As Simmons made his realization, Sarge neared the aircraft. It had powered down and the right side-panel had risen into the fuselage. A group of men and women stood inside the plane; the women were dressed in the exact same uniform Torin had been in, tan shirt, green skirt, brown boots, belt, and all; the men were adorned in something more suited to their gender, brown pants instead of skirts. One of the men stepped out onto the earth, approaching Sarge.

"Hello," he greeted, standing at attention, hand entering the salute position before exiting again. "My name is Charles L. Bruce; I'm the Commanding Officer of the Black Banshee Alpha. I was informed that one of my fleet was shot down near this area. Might you know anything about it?"

Sarge paused. "You mean the Black Banshee _Beta_?"

Bruce looked joyous at the mention of his lost ship. "Yes, that very one! We received many distress signals coming from the area near this canyon, and when we arrived, I was sadly informed that one of her crew was missing."

"I'm presumin' you mean Torinâ€¦"

"Yes, Observer Michelle Torin. You've seen her then?"

Sarge hesitated.

"Who's this guy?" Grif interrupted, seemingly materializing at Sarge's side.

"He's from that fleet Torin was withâ€¦"

"He knew Torin?" This question was supplied by Simmons, who had followed Grif. He looked Bruce up and down. "How did you know her?"

Bruce paused, somewhat confused, before answering him. "I never knew her personally, but I was informed that she was missing by the Beta crew."

"How is that possible?" Simmons inquired, "The Beta crew was killed?"

"Well, you've been misinformed, my friend. Nearly everyone aboard the Black Banshee Beta survived with only scratches and bruises. Only three men were shot and killed, two of them the pilot and co-pilot."

The Red Team exchanged confused glances.

"But Torin told us they all died!" Grif murmured.

"Right she did," Sarge interjected, "but she jumped ship before it hit the ground, remember?"

"Then?" Simmons looked up at Bruce once more. "They were able to send out distress signals?"

"Oh yes, their Communications Officer is quite proficient in regaining contact where contact should be lost. He's very talented; that's why we assigned him there in the first place."

The two words, "Communications Officer", hit Simmons like a ton of bricks. "Wait, Torin said he was dead!" she saw it with her own eyes!

A man stepped off of the ship, a confused look on his face. He had a headset over his left ear and mouth and dirty blonde hair that lingered in his eyes. He took position beside Bruce and folded his arms. "As you can see, I'm not dead. In fact, I'm as alive as they come."

Simmons looked him over. "You're the Communications Officer of the Black Banshee Beta?"

The blonde nodded. "Communications Officer Mark Gale."

Simmons paused again. How was he supposed to compare to _him_?
"Why would she have thought you were dead?"

Gale sighed. "The whole situation was taxing! A man behind me was shot in the head! Michelle wasn't standing too terribly close to me! she may have mistaken him for me in the madness!" Simmons took note of the fact that he had referred to Torin by her first name. "Look," Gale continued fiercely, "we've come in search of Michelle. Have you seen her, or haven't you?"

"We have!" the Reds replied in unison.

Simmons turned around to face the grave near the opposite side of the canyon. "She! was killed yesterday!"

"A rogue sniper," Sarge added.

"That was being fired uponâ€¦" Grif hissed. He received yet another blow to the helmet before the conversation continued.

"â€¦ Killed?" Gale swallowed hard. "â€¦ She was shotâ€¦?"

Bruce sighed. "I was hoping this wasn't the caseâ€¦" Murmurs and whispers started up among the remainder of the crew of the Beta and the Alpha. "Wellâ€¦ thank you for the informationâ€¦ her family will be informed immediatelyâ€¦. Take care of yourselves." He then turned and started toward the ship. Gale, however, didn't move.

"Why was she shot?" he demanded.

"It was an accident," Grif explained. "There was a sniper in the cliffs, and Torin was in the way of his shot, I guess."

"Almost had him, too," Sarge muttered gruffly, "Had that Blue bastard in my sightsâ€¦"

Simmons turned, suddenly sickened, infuriated, and deeply troubled by this conversation. He then headed for the base.

Gale sighed. "I was close to Michelleâ€¦ Did you bury her?" Grif and Sarge nodded. "Show meâ€¦ I'd like to visit her graveâ€¦"

"Gale, we can't afford to waste time here," Bruce called from the Alpha. "We need to be leaving."

"I'm not leaving until I've seen her graveâ€¦" Gale replied over his shoulder as he followed the three Reds back toward their base. Bruce sighed in exasperation before ordering the pilots to ready the ship when Gale returned.

Simmons beat the other three there. He kneeled beside Torin's grave and laid a hand on the top stone of the pyramid. He fought back tears, his breath coming in hiccups and sniffles. Gale stood at the end of the grave, watching both the grave marker and the soldier kneeled over it.

"You knew Torin wellâ€¦?" he asked. Simmons nodded, knowing his voice would crack if he spoke. "â€¦ I can't believe she thought I was deadâ€¦"

"Y'knowâ€¦" Simmons croaked. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Y'knowâ€¦ she thought very highly of youâ€¦"

"What makes you say that?"

"She told meâ€¦ She was very saddened by the thought of your deathâ€¦"

Gale lowered his head. After a silent minute, he found his voice: "Thank youâ€¦" He then turned and slowly made his way back to the Black Banshee Alpha.

An uneasy silence floated on the still, warm air. Soon, though, the roar of the Alpha filled the canyon again as it ascended into the cloudless sky. It spun around and left orbit, headed for Earth to

regroup and finally allow the Observers to go home.

"If she had only lived out one more dayâ€|" Simmons muttered sadly.

Sarge frowned. "Simmons," he called, order in his voice.

"Yes, Sir?"

"You have the afternoon off. C'mon, Grif." Sarge turned and disappeared into the Base. Grif sighed in exasperation and frustration before sulking after him. He only did so, though, to give Simmons some much needed time alone, not to follow Sarge's order.

End
file.